



June 18, 2021

Chairman Scott Lipps  
Ohio House of Representatives  
Health Committee

Re: Opposition HB 248

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify in **opposition** to HB 248. As a pediatric allergist/immunologist at Nationwide Children's Hospital, I strongly support immunizations and urge that all children be fully vaccinated. I believe this bill threatens the health of Ohio's children and would create a devastating impact on Ohio's children and families.

It wasn't that long ago when parents were frightened to send their children outside to play with friends and pools were closed during the summer. That's how scared people were in the 1950's before the polio vaccine was introduced. Of course, history repeated itself in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, which we all vividly recall. If HB 248 passes, we risk reliving these nightmares over and over again, year after year.

We are a victim of our own success. People simply don't recall what life was like before the development and widespread use of childhood vaccines. Vaccines have a robust and long track record of safety and efficacy for a variety of devastating infectious diseases such as polio, measles, whooping cough, meningitis, and now SARS-CoV-2. We can train the immune system to recognize and fight off serious infections through the simple administration of a vaccine. The ability to create long lasting immunity without actually causing sickness is a medical marvel that should be celebrated. The evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that vaccines are safe and effective.

HB 248 isn't just about COVID-19. It impacts ALL vaccines, including those that are highly effective at preventing measles outbreaks in schools, meningitis outbreaks in college dormitories, and whooping cough outbreaks in our community. Ohio already ranks as the 34<sup>th</sup> worst state for childhood vaccination rates, only a percentage from ranking in the bottom 10 states. HB 248 will ensure that the children of Ohio become one of the most at-risk populations in our entire country for a wide variety of entirely **preventable** diseases.

Population health is hard to understand for most people. It deals with large numbers and abstract ideas. Unless you know someone directly affected by a communicable disease, our natural default is to perceive little personal risk. I have the unfortunate experience of knowing what an awful shade of bluish-purple a healthy teenager's skin can turn when they get meningitis. I know how much pain my colleague was in after she cracked her own ribs from coughing when she caught whooping cough. I've met 7-year-olds who have never heard their

mother's voice because they were born deaf due to congenital rubella. HB 248 will make these stories more and more common, perhaps even impacting your own children or grandchildren.

As a specialist in allergy/immunology, I care for children who have immune deficiency and are born missing parts of their immune system. Other patients are at risk for recurrent infections due to their underlying medical conditions. Many of these children have immune systems that can't respond to vaccines and they rely upon everyone else in their school and community to be vaccinated to keep them safe. For these children, HB 248 will turn previously safe environments like school and their soccer team into a new risk for severe illness.

Vaccines are one of the greatest public health achievements in human history. HB 248 simply makes our communities less safe for everyone.

I ask you to move past the current rhetoric surrounding the terrible COVID-19 pandemic that we've all suffered through. I ask you to consider how HB 248 will negatively impact children and families. I ask you to vote NO to HB 248

Thank you for allowing me to comment on HB 248.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DStukus', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

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